**Pandemic telework has been a boon for DoD worker productivity, IG says**

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A vast majority of Defense Department employees found themselves at least as productive teleworking compared to working in an office, and a plurality said their productivity increased, according to the Pentagon’s official watchdog.

A new [report](https://media.defense.gov/2021/Apr/01/2002612366/-1/-1/1/DODIG-2021-065.PDF) from the DoD Inspector General concluded that telework was beneficial to Defense workers, and continued to be as the coronavirus pandemic persisted several months later. About 88% of DoD employees shifted to telework during the pandemic.

“It has been outstanding, to be honest,” one of the nearly 55,000 respondents to the DoD IG survey said. “I have 20 to 25 hours per week in additional time I used to spend commuting. Extra sleep, extra spare time, and yes . . . extra work. Even if I run over 50 hours a week, I’m considerably better off than commuting plus 40 hours in the office.”

A total of 47% of respondents said their productivity increased during maximum telework, 41.1% said their productivity stayed the same and only 11.9% said their productivity decreased.

Respondents reported satisfaction with eliminating unnecessary meetings and cutting out distractions at the office. At the same time, they reported better sleep, less stress and a better work-life balance.

A majority of negative responses about telework centered on IT support issues and increased workloads.

“Micromanagement is rampant,” said one respondent.

“Bad IT support at every point when one needs it the most,” another said.

There were bumps in the road along the way too.

While some DoD agencies like the Defense Information Systems Agency, the Marine Corps and the Defense Logistics Agency almost seamlessly transitioned to maximum telework, others had issues. The Defense Health Agency, Army, Navy, Air Force and Defense Contract Management Agency all had issues supporting maximum telework.

“Survey responses indicated significant issues with network accessibility and teleconferencing during the first two weeks of maximum telework,” the authors of the report stated. “Army chief information officer officials stated that Army personnel experienced difficulties connecting to the Army network through virtual private networks during the initial transition to maximum telework. To address network access limitations, the Army acquired commercial virtual remote licenses and other video conferencing and business meeting software licenses for platforms such as Zoom, WebEx, and GoToMeeting.”

Other issues included problems with software and dealing with the learning curve of using remote working software.

Luckily, things got better as time went on.

“During the first 2 weeks of teleworking, 33.9% of respondents stated that they experienced slow network speeds often or very often,” the authors wrote. “Five months later, 18.3% of respondents reported experiencing slow network speeds often or very often. By August 2020, reports of intermittent connectivity more than 50% of the time declined from 22.6% to 8.5% and reports of software malfunctions more than 50% of the time declined from 17.9% to 9%.”

DoD has been working on increasing the robustness of its teleworking atmosphere since the pandemic started.

Within 30 days of the pandemic taking hold, DISA [increased](https://federalnewsnetwork.com/dod-reporters-notebook-jared-serbu/2020/08/disa-working-on-improvements-to-telework-ensuring-its-here-to-stay/) its storage capacity by 400%. It provisioned circuits that increased network capacity by nearly 500 gigabits per second, and increased virtual private network access by more than 1,000% to about 122,000 telework connections a day.

Military leaders have already praised telework as a new normal and promised there is no looking back.

“We’ve had an 800% increase in our ability to do this teleworking digital experience. Nobody wants to go back to what we were doing. So, how do we take this challenge and use it as an opportunity to move us forward?” said then-Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff Gen. Stephen Wilson [last September](https://federalnewsnetwork.com/air-force/2020/09/were-not-going-back-air-force-leadership-says-telework-is-here-to-stay/).

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